

The Adventures of Fishy Waters:  
In Bed with the Blues

An audio play by

**GUY DAVIS**

## Disc 1

1. Musical Introduction 0:18
2. Ramblin' All Over 5:18
3. Railroad Story 5:40
4. What's It Like Bein' a Hobo 1:00
5. Miss Ripley's Catfish Stew 1:09
6. Candy Man 3:09
7. The Drunken Silkworm 4:43
8. Fly Took Stockings 4:05
9. Madison & the Pigs 3:40
10. The Farmer & His Eight Sons \* 5:35
11. Black Man's Blues 1:48
12. The Lynching 4:24
13. Black Man's Blues Pt. 2 1:02
14. Black Man Dancing \* 1:49
15. Fast Runner \* 2:21
16. Georgia Rag 3:05
17. The One-Legged Grave Robber \* 3:21
18. Close-out Side one music 0:18

## Disc 2

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3. Juno Dies / Nobody Knows the Trouble On My Mind 3:54
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8. Meeting Crazy Cat / Going to Nashville 4:34
9. Two Drunk Hobos \* 2:13
10. Tchula Buck by Campfire 1:05
11. Watch Over Me 4:47
12. Hobos Wake Up and Catch Train 2:54
13. Closing Tune 0:20



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# The Adventures of Fishy Waters: In Bed with the Blues

## An audio play by GUY DAVIS

All songs and stories performed by Guy Davis using six & twelve string Gibson guitars,  
and Hohner "Special 20" harmonicas

Executive Producers: Thom Wolke & Steve Hecht

Producers: Peter Cutler & Thom Wolke

Engineers: Peter Cutler & Jammal Day

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Rear cover sketch by Guy Davis

Lynching image - photographer unknown

All songs, stories, and music beds for stories are written by Guy Davis,  
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*Candy Man* written by Rev. Gary Davis, © Chandos Music

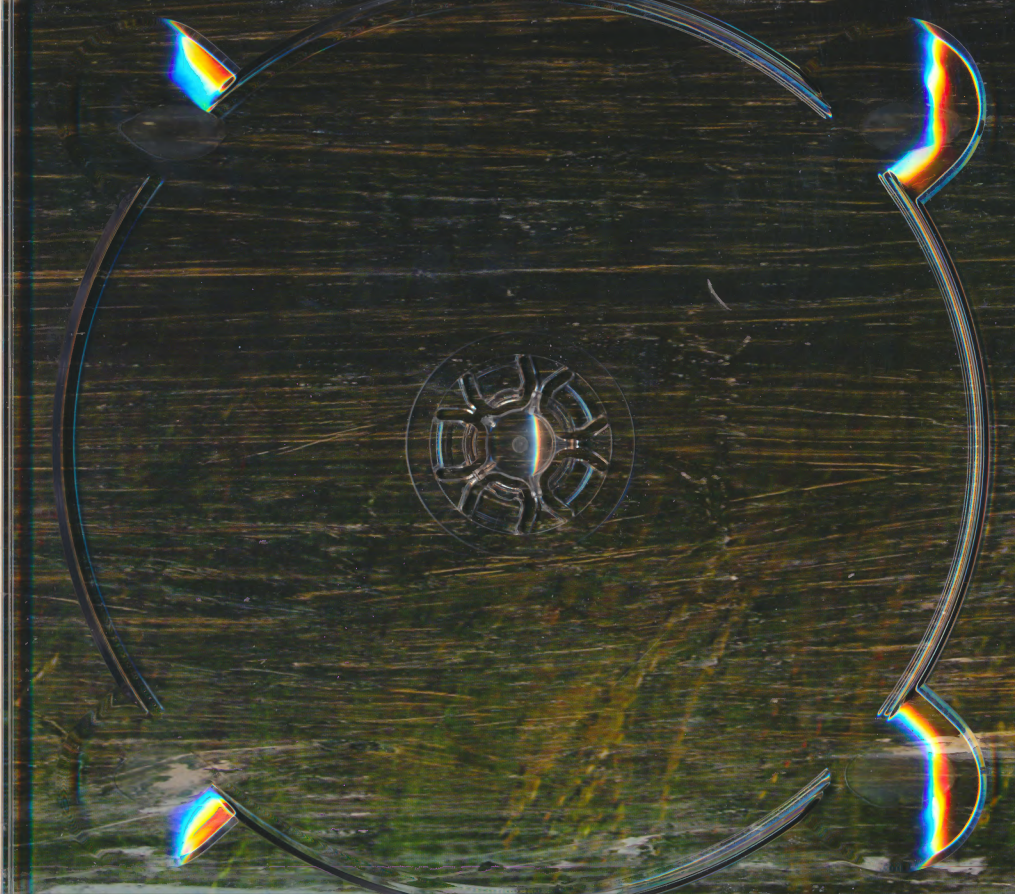
*Georgia Rag* written by Willie McTell, © Songs of Peer, LTD

*Walking Blues* written by Robert Johnson, © MCPA King of Spades Music

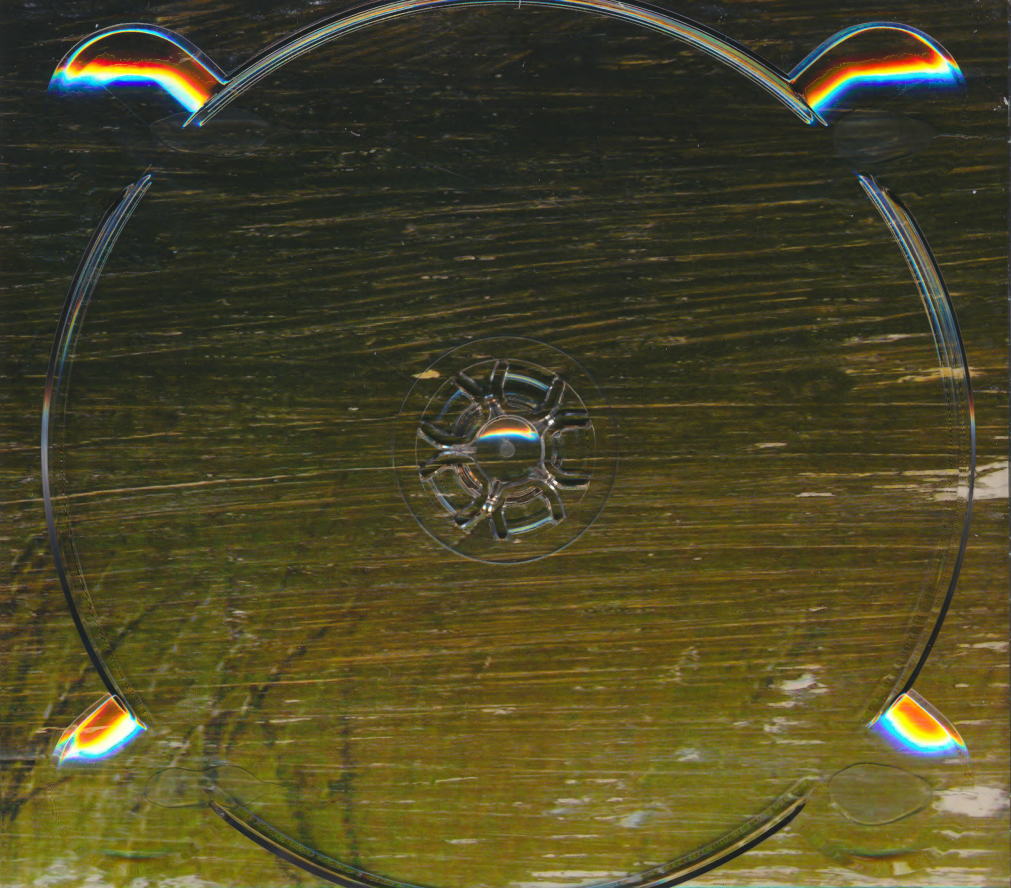
*Good Liquor Gonna Carry Me Down* written by Bill Broonzy, © Universal Music

Guy Davis has nine albums out on the Red House Records label.

For more information on Guy, how to order his music, and his touring schedule,  
please go to [www.guydavis.com](http://www.guydavis.com)







## THE STORY BEHIND FISHY WATERS

*"There is no tale so tall I cannot tell it,  
nor song so sweet I cannot sing it."*

Guy Davis

Story telling is the most ancient, most powerful magic of the universe. There are stories everywhere and in everything. There are stories in cave paintings or Picasso paintings. There are stories in stone sculptures or Aboriginal dream symbol drawings. Rivers and mountains tell stories as do fires, tornados and hurricanes. All we need are the ears to hear them and the mouths to tell them.

In the New Testament of the Christian Bible, there are many tales filled with magic. The teacher, Jesus, performed miracles. He turned water into wine, made a crippled man walk and a blind man see. Perhaps the most amazing of all was

his ability to speak to people and convince them to leave their land, their vineyards, their boats and nets — even their lives, to follow him.

I grew up in a house full of story tellers. I met many more through the years but family members such as my grandpa Marshall (my mom's dad) and my father, Ossie Davis, were among the very best. My grandpa was famous for his rascally tales and jokes but every once in a while he'd tell about the time his mom killed and cooked his pet chicken and he didn't realize it until after he had eaten it! My dad could tell a story over and over and make it fun every time.

All these factors came together in my life and were helpful to me in writing **The Adventures of Fishy Waters: In Bed with the Blues**. But there was a time that I didn't even know I could write. It all began with a chance to earn some money back in 1987 when I was out of work.

I was approached by a New York City group called Hospital Audiences Incorporated. This was a group who advocated tirelessly for handicapped and wheel chair accessibility to theatres, even those on Broadway. Their other major mission was to bring entertainment into hospitals, drug rehab clinics, halfway houses and homeless shelters. I had worked such places as an entertainer but now I was asked to write an anti-drug abuse play. It was an opportunity to be twice employed: as an author as well as an actor.

The play I wrote, **The Trial: Judgment of the People**, ran about forty-five minutes and required two actors to play about ten parts. My partner, Jamal Joseph (now a Columbia University professor), directed the piece and acted one of the parts. The HAI folks auditioned us, accepted us and sent us on our way to shelters, prisons, housing project community rooms and even a college in Connecticut. The piece was so well received that I got some development money to get the length up to an hour and twenty minutes.

At this point, HAI ran the piece in an off-broadway theater for several weeks. In time, I was given more money and the piece was developed once more with the addition of more characters, scenes and even a third actor. I directed that version.



All this was in my mind when I was working on **Mulebone** by Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes in 1991. These were two of the names I had heard around the supper table growing up. In fact, I'd had some experience with Hurston's work about ten years earlier. I had acted in a play created by my mother, Ruby Dee, titled **Zora Is My Name**, which was based on the songs and folktales originally collected by her.

Zora started collecting stories as a child in her hometown of Eatonville, Florida. While she did some audio recording, she memorized the stories and songs she had collected well enough to perform them herself. She also wrote books of both folklore and fiction based on her travels. Her stuff was irresistible. The songs were so sing-able. The tales were so tell-able.

I understudied four parts in **Mulebone**. Among them was the traveling blues musician played by Kenny Neal. The play was presented by Lincoln Center and was staged at the Ethel Barrymore Theater on Broadway. The green room was downstairs, directly underneath the stage. Night after night I heard the footsteps of the actors as they danced and spoke. I knew most of the stories and longed to be on stage telling those tales and singing those songs.

Most often I was reading. I had a book of American Negro Folklore and some of the tales were hilarious. Night after night I read the stories and began to memorize them. Often I'd instinctively make changes because the dialect and colloquialisms were frequently difficult to absorb. I was afraid that folks — white or black — wouldn't understand them.

All these factors had come together in my life and I began to write. **The Adventures Of Fishy Waters: In Bed with the Blues** was written backstage at the Ethel Barrymore Theater while I was an understudy in **Mulebone**.

After the close of **Mulebone**, I was cast in the title role of **Robert Johnson: Trick the Devil**, a fictional account of Johnson's death. It was written by Bill Harris, and directed by Woodie King Jr. for the off-Broadway, Henry Street Settlement. My performance won me a Harlem theater award called an "Audelco" and a "Keeping The Blues Alive" Award from the Blues Foundation in Memphis.

The Henry Street Settlement was also the location for the debut of **The Adventures Of Fishy Waters: In Bed with the Blues** in 1994. While the initial run was only a week, the play has been since been performed when and wherever there's an opportunity that fits my schedule.

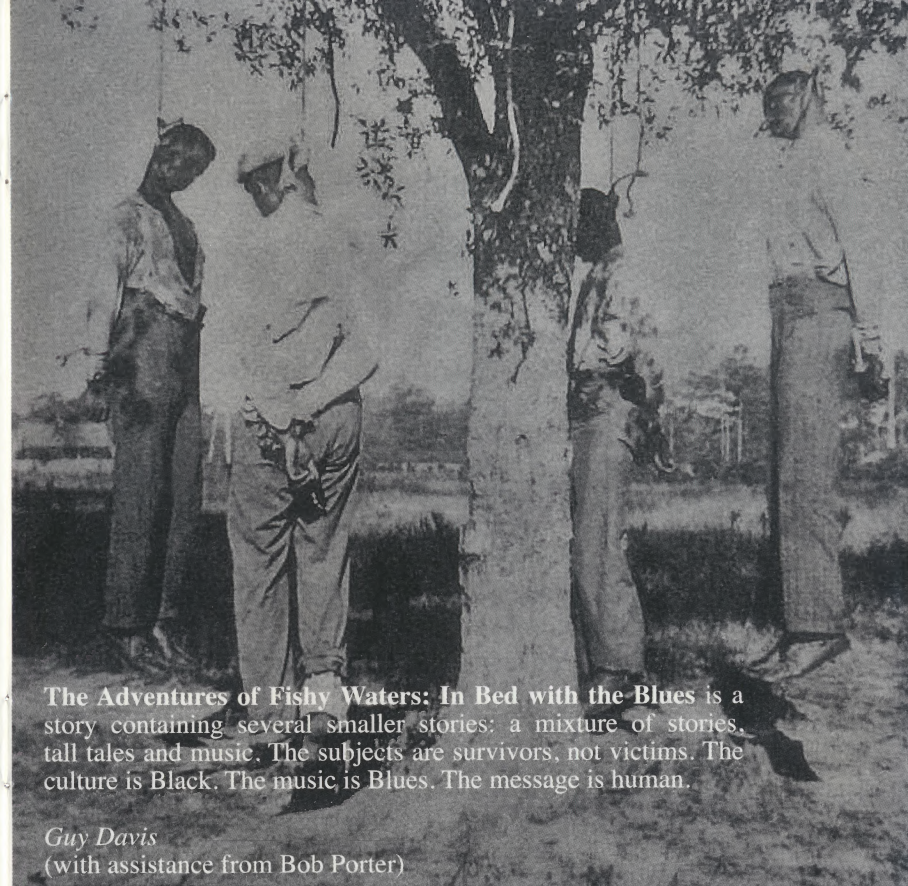
While the show was running I was also playing whatever gigs I could find around New York: late, lamented spots like Dan Lynch's on 2nd Avenue, Chicago Blues on 8th Avenue and Terra Blues on Bleeker Street in The Village - that one is still going. I won the KLON Blues Talent Search semi-finals in New York and finished third in the national finals at the Long Beach Blues Festival. This provided a bump to my night club and concert performance career.

Still, the play has been performed in Australia, Canada, and England. It has been done at The New Federal Theater in New York and The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland. One of the most memorable nights was in Oakland California when Brownie McGhee attended. Another time, in Florida, I got to do the play in front of Billy Branch, Charlie Musslewhite and David "Honey Boy" Edwards.

The task of a story teller, in a dramatic setting, is to include stories that encompass the full range of emotion. Funny stories, serious subjects, even ugly things. It must be done in such a way that a white audience won't feel accused and uncomfortable, or a black audience won't feel offended by a perceived return to Uncle Tom humor. As a story teller I strive to present vivid,

thought provoking images. The fewer words it takes me, the better. I didn't set out to write a book. I didn't set out to explain, represent or save black people. The piece is written to communicate as simply as possible a sense of humanity.

Some tales allow us to view inhuman treatment and laugh with the recognition that a person will do anything in order to survive. Others focus on the enormity of a terrible tragedy too big to be absorbed by us, and must use humor to deflect the nature of events. There will be moments when a white audience will be very silent and attentive while black members of the audience will roar with laughter.



**The Adventures of Fishy Waters: In Bed with the Blues** is a story containing several smaller stories: a mixture of stories, tall tales and music. The subjects are survivors, not victims. The culture is Black. The music is Blues. The message is human.

*Guy Davis*  
(with assistance from Bob Porter)



## Thank You

Thank you Peter Cutler, for your recording of my words and music,  
and for adding all of those marvelous sound effects.

Thanks Jammal Day, for the recording of additional material and your skillful editing.

Thank you Ruby Dee for your unflappable belief in the spoken word, and especially  
for having exposed me to the written and recorded works of Zora Neale Hurston.

Thank you James Recchione (AKA "Get Lost Jimmy")  
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Thank you New York Foundation of the Arts for bestowing upon my play,  
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Thanks Dowoti Desir for helping me apply for that grant.

Thank you Woodie King Jr. of the New Federal Theater in  
New York City, for first producing the earliest version of this  
work as a staged play.

Thank you Brownie McGhee for your musical encouragement.

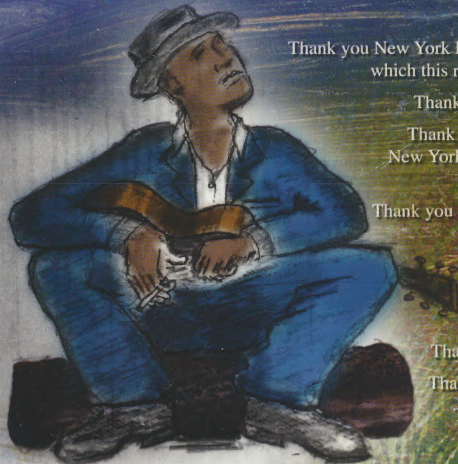
Thank you Brother Blue and Ruth,  
for showing me how a story is told.

Thank you Jon Hichborn for keeping  
all my publishing matters straight.

Thank you Amy Putnam for taking care of my website.

Thank you Steve & the whole gang at Piedmont Talent.

Thank you Thom Wolke for always encouraging me  
to say yes to the possibilities.



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